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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIJING 001929

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TENSIONS SUBSIDE IN URUMQI UNDER CONTINUED HEAVY
SECURITY

REF: BEIJING 1909

Classified By: Acting Political Minister Counselor Ben Moeling.
Reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) Poloff in Urumqi witnessed no new disturbances during the course of July 9. Public transportation was operational and many businesses had reopened. Poloff witnessed Uighurs walking unmolested in predominantly Han neighborhoods. Uighur neighborhoods appeared to have far less activity and foot traffic than other areas of the city with almost no evidence of Han presence. Rumors circulated in the Uighur community that 380 people, mostly Uighurs, had been killed on July 5. PAP patrols and propaganda efforts continue to appear to be directed primarily at preventing revenge attacks by the Han population. Han residents expressed anger towards Uighurs in general and against the Chinese government for allowing the violence to happen. Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang traveled to Urumqi on July 9 and delivered a public speech to security personnel praising their conduct during the unrest. The Acting Political Minister Counselor met with MFA to register U.S. concern about events in Xinjiang, and caution that Chinese government statements about the violence being "orchestrated" by groups in the United States were not helpful. MFA replied that China did not want this incident to negatively influence bilateral relations. So far, the only reports of violence the Embassy has received have been from Urumqi. American citizens in Kashgar noted that, except for a previously reported protest on July 6, which involved several hundred Uighurs and broke up peacefully, there have not been incidents there. The Consular Section has contacted 62 American Citizens in Xinjiang Province, including 43 in Urumqi. End Summary

SITUATION ON THE GROUND IN URUMQI

12. (C) Poloff and ARSO, in Urumqi, witnessed no signs of new large-scale disturbances. The curfew (called by local government officials "traffic restrictions") of was not renewed for the evening of July 8 and Poloff was able to meet with contacts in Urumqi until late at night. PAP deployments around the city remained heavy, but troop presence was lighter than it had been on July 8. Key intersections that had been closed to traffic on July 8 were opened to pedestrians. Public transportation was operational and many businesses had reopened. Poloff witnessed Uighurs walking unmolested in predominantly Han neighborhoods. Uighur neighborhoods appeared to have far less activity and foot traffic than other areas of the city with almost no evidence of Han presence. Uighurs were nervous and reluctant to speak with foreigners but several told Poloff that, according to rumors circulating in the Uighur community, 380 people,

mostly Uighurs, had been killed on July 5. No one has provided information to substantiate this figure.

13. (C) PAP patrols and propaganda efforts continued to appear to be directed primarily at preventing reprisals by the Han population. Banners and announcements by loudspeaker exhorted Han citizens to ignore rumors and strengthen national unity. All propaganda measures were in Chinese with no apparent Uighur language messages, and the Urumqi Party Chief, at a press conference, specifically called on Han citizens to show restraint. Poloff witnessed a small gathering of Uighurs holding a banner in Chinese expressing thanks to the PAP and condolences for PAP losses. The group was allowed to display the banner briefly before being moved along by PAP personnel.

UIGHURS IN URUMQI AVOID FOREIGNERS; HAN ARE ANGRY

14. (C) Han residents expressed anger towards Uighurs in general and against the Chinese government for allowing the violence to happen. None of Poloff's Han interlocutors admitted to believing that the United States or Rebiya Kadeer were behind the violence, several stating that "it was just too huge." One Han resident approached Poloff to inquire if he was American and stated that two of his brothers had been killed on July 5. He, too, stated that he did not blame the United States for the violence but expressed disappointment with the subsequent reaction by U.S. leaders. He stated that he used to think highly of the United States due to its commitment to human rights but that he viewed the Department of State statement calling for restraint on all sides as

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"incorrect" and unfair to Han victims.

VIOLENCE CONFINED TO URUMQI

15. (C) So far, the only reports of violence the Embassy has received have been from Urumqi. Embassy officers contacted American citizens in Kashgar and asked about their welfare and their assessment of the situation. The AMCITs stated that they are fine, and noted that except for a previously reported protest in Kashgar on July 6, which involved several hundred Uighurs and broke up peacefully, there have not been incidents there. Other cities and areas in China with Uighur populations have not reported disturbances.

U.S. DIPLOMATS MEET WITH CHINESE GOVERNMENT

16. (C) The Acting Political Minister Counselor met with MFA North American and Oceanian Affairs Department USA Division Deputy Director Zhao Yumin (Director An Gang was in Italy for the G-8) and noted U.S. concern about events in Xinjiang. He expressed our condolences for those who have been killed and injured in Xinjiang and called on all sides to show maximum restraint and avoid further violence. Zhou said that China wanted the United States to "know the real facts," and that in the coming days the MFA and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) government would share any information they had about the riots, including more specific information about those who were killed. A/POL M/C said any information the Chinese government could provide would be appreciated, and noted the positive, practical steps the Chinese government had taken in allowing relatively free access to Urumqi for foreign and domestic media. He cautioned that statements by the Chinese government about the violence being "orchestrated" by groups in the United States were not helpful, could create negative impressions of the United States in the Chinese people and were bad for bilateral relations. Zhou urged the United States to understand the sensitivity of the situation and said China believed Rebiya Kadeer was a "criminal" despite supposedly being in the U.S. for medical treatment. However, he stressed that bilateral

relations were "very good," and said China did not want this incident to negatively influence bilateral relations.

MEDIA COVERAGE

17. (U) National and local media have still not released any information on the names or ethnicity of any of the victims killed on July 5 but continue to broadcast the figure of 156 fatalities. On July 8, CNN International was blacked out for the duration of an interview with Rebiya Kadeer. Television coverage of the unrest by local Xinjiang stations consisted of the continuous replaying of commentary and footage from July 7 and 8. Politburo Standing Committee member Zhou Yongkang traveled to Urumqi on July 9 and delivered a public speech security personnel praising their conduct during the unrest.

18. (U) separately, local media gave prominent coverage to the visit to Urumqi by Minister of Public Security Meng Jianzhu. Meng's comments that rioters should be severely punished but that those who were "deceived by separatists" into participating should be "educated," were widely replayed. Nationally, Xinhua outlets featured heavy coverage of interviews with ethnic affairs experts and religious leaders universally denouncing the violence and attributing it to "overseas separatist forces," including an interview with an imam at the Niu Jie Academy of Islamic Studies who characterized the unrest as "unislamic."

CONSULAR ISSUES

19. (SBU) The Consular Section has contacted 62 American Citizens in Xinjiang Province, including 43 in Urumqi. Roughly half this total are short-term visitors or tourists. A travel alert has been drafted for release the evening of July 9, 2009.
GOLDBERG